

"ALLANDALE" AN OLD ADOBE HOUSE  
CUNNINGHAM FARM NEAR  
VIRGINIA ILLINOIS  
CASS Co.

HABS. NO. ILL-261

HABS  
ILL,

9- VIRG.V,

1-

*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*  
PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
DISTRICT NO. ILL-2

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
• EDGAR E. LUNDEEN - DISTRICT OFFICER •  
CORN BELT BANK BUILDING - BLOOMINGTON ILL.

HABS  
ILL,  
9- VIRG. V,  
1-

"ALLANDALE"

An Old Adobe House - Cunningham Farm  
North-east of Virginia - Cass County - Illinois

Owner. Miss Hilma Jones.

Date of Erection. 1852.

Architect. None.

Builder. Andrew Cunningham.

Present Condition. The exterior plaster is falling off in places and, with the help of termites, the building has deteriorated. Generally, however, it is well preserved, considering climatic conditions as they affect adobe construction. The building stands as originally built except for the addition on the west, erected of brick about 1868.

Number of Stories. One and one-half. No basement.

Materials of Construction. Foundations and exterior walls of "adobe" block, 6 x 12 x 18 inches, made of mud and bound by hair scraped from hides. (The builder operated a tannery near the site.) Cement plaster covering on exterior. Rafters and joists are of hewn oak. Wood shingle roof. Galvanized iron awnings supported on cast iron brackets. Pine floors and trim.

Other Existing Records.

"An Old Adobe House" by Lorene Martin,  
Illinois State Historical Society Journal,  
July, 1935, Vol. 28, #2.

Additional Data. In 1834, Andrew Cunningham, a young Scotchman, came to America to establish a tannery. The fol-

lowing summer he arrived in what is now Cass County, found an abundant supply of oak timber and water, and immediately set about with the erection and operation of the tannery. This tannery was abandoned shortly after the civil war and no trace of it now remains.

Mr. Cunningham first lived in a small house. Transportation of suitable building materials being a problem, he decided to build his new and larger house of sun-dried mud mixed with the hair from the hides he used at the tannery. The following letter sent to Mr. Cunningham from Adam Drysdale, giving information received from a Mr. Ross, a builder of mud houses in Toronto, Canada, explains the method used in making the blocks. This letter is dated May 8, 1845....."The mould for mud brick to be made of 1-1/2 inch stuff, 18 inches long, 12" broad, 6" deep, the ends to be double tenoned, also let into the sides. Let it be one-half in check and groove to keep the mould strong and square. To mix the clay and straw, or hay, make a pit 12 feet square, 12 inches deep, laid in bottom with boards, and a board all around the edge. Put in as much clay all over, say 8 inches deep, let it be well broke, free of lumps, then pour water over it sufficient to make it soft and pliable. If the clay is very dry and tough, prepare it in the evening and let it lay all night. In the morning cover it all over with straw about 2 inches deep, then tread with one or two horses or oxen and keep turning it over as it gets trode. If any more straw is necessary, sprinkle

a little more on after it is well mixed and let the straw be kept from getting in lumps. Level a piece of ground convenient to the batch to lay the brick on. Lay your mould on the ground, let it be plunged in water before you fill, then fill, press it down gently and rake off like a bushel of grain. Pull up your mould, throw it in the water, sprinkle sand over the soft brick, and lay them side by side, say 6 inches apart for air. When fit to turn, let them be set on edge to dry and so on. It will require one man to mould, one boy to carry the mould out of the water, visa versa one man to wheel it to the moulder, and so on."

An original mould is still preserved and the adobe walls are plainly visible on the west wall of the second floor.

The exterior of the walls were plastered with cement mortar when first constructed, and again in 1905. This protective coat is again falling off. The awnings and the overhanging eaves were placed all around the building as a further protection to the walls. The cast iron brackets were designed by Mr. Cunningham and cast in a foundry in Ohio. Most of the original glass in the windows still remains intact.

After passing the age of 70, and until his death at the age of 88, Mr. Cunningham spent his time carving, in choice specimens of wood, excellent little images of the mythological or other characters about which he read in his books.

Miss Jones, the owner, has a veritable museum of art objects and books, most of which have some family connection.

References:

Miss Hilma Jones, granddaughter of Andrew Cunningham.

Illinois State Historical Society Journal,  
July, 1935, Vol. 28, #2, Lorene Martin.

(Approved)

Walter E. Lundeen  
District Officer